THE

RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

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EDITORIALS

SABOTAGING JEWISH UNITY
DANGEROUS APOLOGETICS
A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

GOD OUR REDEEMER
A Piyyut for the Geulah Prayer
by Mordecai M. Kaplan

RELIGIOUS SANCTIONS FOR THE SEX-GUIDANCE OF MODERN JEWISH YOUTH
(Concluded)
by Eugene Kohn

HENRIETTA SZOLD
by Miriam J. Cohen

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THE
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EDITORIALS

Sabotaging Jewish Unity

WHILE the enemy is battering away at the defences of Jewish life with unprecedented savagery and determination, those who are in command of the hard-beset surviving forces are once again indulging in the luxury of falling out among themselves and acting like willful children instead of mature men entrusted with the responsibility of leadership. This time their quarrel is between the Joint Distribution Committee and the Zionist Organization. So well and so heartily do the leaders in both camps enjoy their scrap that they are trying hard to keep it a secret lest some neutrals learn about it and spoil their fun by insisting that it is most untimely and expensive at the present time.

We of the Reconstructionist, having learned of what led the elders of the J.D.C. and the Zionist Organization to part company and to decide upon conducting separate campaigns, regard their action as unwarranted and as fraught with great danger to Jewish life. Both parties in this instance are equally guilty of sabotaging Jewish unity.

The Zionist World Congress, at Lucerne, it appears, railroaded through a resolution to the effect that Zionist campaigns should not be conducted jointly with other local campaigns. The representatives of the Zionist Organization of America, realizing the ineptitude of such a policy for American Jewry, made an attempt to qualify it. Instead of vigorously refusing to submit to such a ruling, however, they allowed themselves to be swayed by some members of the Executive who openly stated that it was necessary to conduct a separate Zionist campaign even if it meant collecting less funds. They accepted the ruling in principle, though they left themselves a loophole by which they hoped to circumvent that ruling.

This fact, together with the tactical mistake of the Jewish National Fund last year, which in its zeal conducted a drive on its own account, was taken advantage of by some in the J.D.C. councils who had originally been opposed to cooperation with the Zionists in any relief campaign, and who were waiting for some incident to which they might point as a valid reason for severing connections. The action of the World Congress provided the needed incident. The explanation proffered by the American Zionist leaders was not accepted, and it was decided to dissolve the merger of the two campaigns. There is rejoicing among the Myrmidons in both groups. They have been praying for this all the time and have contributed largely to the fulfillment of that prayer.

It is evident that once again there flared

up the fires of bitter dissension between the two extreme groups in Jewry, the fanatical Zionists and the determined assimilationists. The former would sacrifice diaspora Jewry for the prestige of Palestine; the latter destroy Palestine in order to facilitate the assimilation of diaspora Jewry. The fanatical Zionists have no interest whatever in the millions of Jews who can never come to Palestine and who are struggling to achieve a *modus vivendi* in the diaspora. They would urge unlimited concentration upon Palestine even at the expense of Jewish communal life and Jewish institutions in the diaspora. On the other hand, the determined assimilationists, seeing in Palestine a cohesive Jewish influence and a source of new strength to the Jewish consciousness, would agree with a certain late Jewish millionaire when he said that he would give millions for settling Jews in Russia but not one cent for settling them in Palestine. They could not but be restive under an arrangement which included the upbuilding of Palestine.

The fact that Palestine has absorbed the majority of Jewish refugees from Germany and that it has demonstrated its value as a practical solution for thousands of homeless Jews does not allay the blind prejudice of the assimilationists against Palestine. And the fact that without Jewish unity and life in the diaspora Palestine itself cannot be rebuilt seems to make no difference with the fanatical Zionists. All that was necessary was to find a plausible *casus belli* and the entente was broken, and already the atmosphere reverberates with attacks and recriminations. At Atlantic City, one of the major generals of the J.D.C. recently fired a barrage at Zionism. So far there has been only sniping from the opposite camp; presumably the heavy artillery will soon go into action.

We insist that Jewish leaders have no right to use their power to rend the Jewish body in twain. Anyone who assumes the right to take a leading part in a Jewish undertaking should not dare to spurn the hand that is offered as an expression of willingness to cooperate. Jewish unity is today the only hope of a Jewish future, and one who deliberately destroys it should not be permitted to have a voice in Jewish affairs, whether he be Zionist or anti-Zionist. We plead in the name of all that is holy, and for the sake of the Jewish people, that the fatal decision to conduct separate campaigns be rescinded and an effort made by both groups to transcend their prejudices against each other for the sake of the martyred people to which they both belong.

Dangerous Apologetics

A RECENT press release given out jointly by the American Jewish Committee, the B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Labor Committee endeavors to refute the charge which in recent years has so often been advanced by anti-Semites, to the effect that Jews are communists and hence a menace to the social order. The American Jewish Congress refused to associate itself with the statement on the ground that it implied a denial of the right of Jews to adhere to whatever social creed they desired, be it radical or conservative. Writing from the communist angle, James Waterman Wise goes so far as to impugn the motives of the authors of the statement in these words: "Their statement, concocted out of fear for themselves, libels against Russia, and lies about the Jewish people, is nothing less than an offer of their services to the fascists of America in return for personal immunity and private safety."

We cannot concur in this indictment. There is no reason to ascribe to the authors of the joint pronouncement any sinister design to encourage fascism while purchasing for themselves immunity against anti-Semitic fascist attack. There is no ground for believing that Cyrus Adler, Alfred M. Cohen and B. C. Vladeck, the signatories to the statement, were actuated by any motive other than a laudable

desire to counteract hostile propaganda against the Jews. But the fact that their words could be construed as they have been construed is significant in pointing out the danger that inheres in this sort of Jewish apologetics.

Their method of combating anti-Semitism is to watch for every charge that is directed against the Jews and to prove it false. On the face of it this seems a reasonable procedure. Even if we grant that the accusations directed against the Jew by anti-Semites do not express their real grounds for hating him, nevertheless the dissemination of these accusations is shrewdly calculated to incite against the Jew elements of the population who have hitherto shown no antipathy toward him. A man who may never have had any feeling either friendly or hostile with respect to the Jew as such, but who has been indoctrinated with the notion that all communists are sinister enemies of society can readily be influenced to take an anti-Jewish stand if Jews are identified in his mind with communism. What more natural, then, than to call attention to unscrupulous exaggeration of the part played by Jews in the communist movement when it is apparent that the sole motive of making such a charge was to direct against the Jew the widespread antipathy that is felt toward communism? In all this, there is no logical justification for any inference that the Jew has not a full right to be a communist if he so desires, or that the antipathy of most people to communism, which makes the charge that Jews are communists an incitement, is a justifiable one.

But the danger of this method of dealing with anti-Semitism is that the inferences which people draw from a statement are not determined by logical consequences but by factual consequences. As a result, arguments which are designed to win us friends in one quarter may have the effect of making us enemies in another. Whatever was the intent of the statement, its effect—whether this be a logical reaction or not—is to encourage the impression that for a Jew to be a communist would be reprehensible. It should, therefore, have been anticipated by the authors that their statement would identify the Jewish people in the minds of communists and other radical critics of the status quo with fascism. Such an identification would appear the more plausible in view of the fact that most Jews are of the middle class and that fascism is, in the first instance, a revolt of the middle class against big business on the one hand and organized labor on the other.

Perhaps this danger was foreseen, but little weight has been given to it because of the small number of the communists in America. But such an opportunism is dangerous in the extreme. It is, in effect, staking the interests of Jewry on the ability to win over those whose social attitude predisposes them to anti-Semitism rather than to make the most of the friendship of those whose social attitude predisposes them to fight anti-Semitism as social reaction. And what if the balance of social forces shifts to the left? Will those who subscribed their names to the statement begin searching the archives of the Communist Party for proof of the illustrious part the Jews played in furthering communism? How can they be sure that, in the long run, they are betting on the right horse? They condemn today the disabilities under which Jewish religion labors in Russia. May it not well be that the overeagerness of influential Jews in Czarist days to prove the unswerving loyalty of the Jews to the Czarist regime had some influence in bringing about the present situation?

The way to fight anti-Semitism is not by refuting specific charges. It is by working, on the one hand, for a social order in which the general economic security will remove the basis for anti-Jewish discrimination, and by cooperating, on the other, with all those liberal forces that are endeavoring to discover the nature of racial and religious prejudices, to expose the ra-

tionalizations behind which these masquerade and to reveal the sinister methods of partisan propaganda. It was a mistake to have attempted to refute the charge that Jews are communists. But, having committed this mistake, the least that the authors of the statement can do to mitigate its effect is to publish another statement showing that Jews are not fascists, that they are not seeking a dictatorship of the middle class.

A Threat to Democracy

THE return of Angelo Herndon to a Georgia chain gang is an ominous indication of the trend of fascism in American public life. What is the "crime" for which this young Negro worker was given his cruel sentence of 18 to 20 years hard labor in a chain gang? That he led a demonstration of colored and white workers in demand of adequate unemployment relief. An anti-insurrection statute going back to the Civil War days was torn out of its context to provide the necessary legal basis for the decision. The Supreme Court has been appealed to in vain. The entire case seems to rest now in the hands of Governor Talmadge. Unless public opinion moves him to grant clemency, Angelo Herndon will have to pay that tragic price for having dared to champion the cause of the poor, the downtrodden and the disinherited in the state of Georgia.

Our concern with this case is, however, dictated by more than the anxiety to prevent this living death, this legal lynching of an innocent man. Why has the state of Georgia been so unreasonably brutal? Because Georgia's ruling class is unwilling to pay in taxes the cost of adequate relief and they think they can terrorize the unemployed into acquiescence in their own misery by the ruthless suppression of their militant leadership. Because they are afraid that gifted leaders like Herndon can enlighten the exploited masses of the country to the true causes of their misery and that the mounting mass unrest may threaten their privilege and power. That is exactly the psychology of fascism. Abrogate civil liberty and the processes of democracy because they ultimately become dangerous to the status quo. With free speech, the champions of the people's right may sow the seeds of widespread social discontent which, with democratic procedure available, may then be translated into such reforms as may shake the vested interest of the ruling class.

A case like Herndon's then becomes a test case in the fight for the preservation of democracy as against fascism.

The duty of all who would defend democracy therefore becomes clear. They must rally to the fight for the liberation of Herndon as an indispensable part of that larger fight against fascism in America. The outstanding leaders of liberal America have joined forces on this vital issue. The leaders of religion are joining on this, also. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise and Rev. R. Niebuhr have had a large share in popularizing the cause of Herndon before the conscience of America. We trust that American Jewry will do its share. The committees on Social Justice of the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue should go on record for the freedom of Herndon. Individual rabbis and laymen should do likewise. Governor Talmadge must be flooded with letters demanding Herndon's release. With all sections of our population, particularly the religious elements, cooperating, this test case can be won for democracy, for civil liberty, and for justice.

GOD OUR REDEEMER *

A Piyyut for the Geulah Prayer

Reader

The God we worship
Is the God
Our fathers glorified,

When in ecstatic joy
They celebrated His wondrous deeds in Egypt,
And sang of Israel's miraculous deliverance from cruel bondage.

Congregation

O God, we have heard with our ears,
Our fathers have told us the tale
Of Thy works in ancient years. (Ps. 44: 2).

Reader

They could then but dimly sense,
In all its overwhelming transcendence
And in all its penetrating immanence,
The Godhood of the God they adored,

No more than the suckling babe
That looks into its mother's eyes
Can read the thoughts of love and hope and fear
In their returning gaze.

Congregation

For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isa. 55: 9).

Reader

But Israel's intuitive awareness
Of God's power to redeem
Was God's first revelation of Himself to Israel;
And in the tale they told of their salvation,

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*This *piyyut* will be included in the new Friday Evening Service which the rabbinical members of the Editorial Board are preparing. Other *piyyutim* will be published from time to time.

They knelled the fate which tyrants must expect.
They who slave their fellowmen
Exacting endless toil and lawless tribute
Cheapening the worth of human life,
And crushing out its latent glories
Are driven by their arrogance to self-defeating lengths,
And in their ruthless lust for power,
Bound to meet their doom.

Congregation

With my soul have I desired Thee in the night;
Yea with my spirit within me have I sought Thee earnestly;
For when Thy judgments are in the earth,
The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. (Isa. 26: 9).

Reader

In mastering this law of human life,
Our fathers grew aware
That God commanded justice, brotherhood and mercy,
And that nations could not flout for long
The word of God without disaster.
They bore with patience causeless hatred ,
And endured with resignation
Slander, torture and dishonor.
They sanctified the name of God,
Waiting hopefully until the time
When God would manifest His glory unto the peoples,
And redeem mankind from suffering and sin.

Congregation

Nay, but for Thy sake are we slain all the day;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
Arise for our help
And redeem us for Thy mercy's sake. (Ps. 44: 23, 27).

Mordecai M. Kaplan

Religious Sanctions for The Sex-Guidance of Modern Jewish Youth

By EUGENE KOHN

(Concluded from last issue)

WE have permitted this digression from the formulation of our code of sex behavior, because it is necessary as an introduction to our derivation of those principles that concern the behavior of unmarried persons in respect to sex. Even people who profess to take the marital relationship seriously frequently condone temporary liaisons and even prostitution on the part of unmarried people. Although such practices are not sanctioned by either the Jewish or Christian tradition, there is a disposition to look upon them as mere indiscretions of the privileged peccadillos of youth, rather than as serious violations of a moral code. Such an attitude, however, should be discountenanced, if for no other reason, than because the practices which it condones defeat the purpose of a concentrated sex life, which is designed to enhance the significance and insure the stability and social efficiency of the marital relation.

Particularly must recourse to prostitution be condemned. We may overlook, for the moment, the social consequences of this practice, how it involves the practical enslavement of great numbers of women, for whom a normal home life is forever made impossible. We may disregard devices to which greed resorts in order to insure an ever fresh supply of "white slaves," and ignore the complicity in this social evil of all who help to make the traffic profitable. We cannot fail, however, to condemn prostitution from the point of view of its degrading influence on those who indulge themselves in that evil. For sex experience, at its highest and sweetest, is an intimate communion between two people in which their whole person is involved, an experience that is the fulfillment of hope and yearning, and implies as well a promise for the future. The testimony of every day speech is significant. To love a person is to "care for" him. Where there is no care, there is no love, and, where there is no love, sex is profaned. A man cannot in his youth hold sex so cheap as to measure the value of a sex experience in terms of money of whatever denomination, and then expect that, by the miracle of marriage sex will suddenly come to have an entirely different meaning for him in later life. We do not say that the miracle never happens, but that if it does, it cannot be dissociated from shame and remorse and a repudiation of one's former life.

Much of what we have said with regard to prostitution applies as well to those liaisons between an unmarried man and woman which are designed to last for a longer period, and involve more of personal choice and discrimination, but which are nevertheless entered into with mental reservations as to the duration of the relationship, and as to the extent of the obligations assumed. Such alliances stand, indeed, on a higher plane than the sordid commercialism of prostitution, but they are nevertheless a degradation of sex because they are a cowardly evasion of responsibility. Much romantic fiction has tried to invest the courtesan and her lover with a sentimental glamour. It has created a race of men and women—and probably among the wealthy some specimens of the race really exist—who make a cult of love, tasting it as an epicure does his wines or his viands and delighting in change and variety. We may describe their attitude as a cult of love for love's sake. Again one is tempted to point out an analogy between the demands of ethics and of esthetics "Art for art's sake" has never produced

the highest art. It has always tended to overemphasize technique and to degenerate into artifice. Even such an esthete as Keats recognized the relation of the esthetic ideal to the ethical when he said:

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know."

So love, too, must be not for love's sake but for life's sake. It must imply a certain self-forgetfulness and abandonment of one's individual interests in the service of the person one loves, and a desire to multiply rather than to limit the mutual relations that are possible between the two. It is a far cry from the evasive, hesitant, usually clandestine love-with-reservations that such liaisons usually express to a love experience that answers to the description in Tennyson's lines:

"Love took up the harp of life and smote on all the cords with might;
Smote the cord of self that, trembling, passed in music out of sight."

The least to be condemned of all sex offenses are those tentative experiments with the mysteries of sex communion which boys and girls, careless of ultimate consequences, sometimes enter out of a sincere though usually shallow attraction for each other. Nobody who has not forgotten the impatient eagerness of his own youth for sex experience can be disposed to severity with the young for moral lapses of this nature. This does not mean, however, that such conduct is beyond censure. It means rather that the older generation must be made aware of its responsibility for fortifying youth against temptation to an immature and imperfect sex experience on a low ethical and esthetic level. The only way in which parents and teachers can do this is by convincing the adolescent boy and girl of the possibility of a deeper, nobler and more vital sex-experience for which a certain amount of self-control and self-culture are prerequisites.

VI

This brings us face to face with the question: Granted that an ethical code based on sociological and psychological considerations would restrict sex behavior in the manner we have indicated, how can our youth be persuaded to accept such a code? This is not the place to consider in detail the educational techniques to be applied to this end. It would take us even further afield were we to consider the changes in legal and social institutions that are desirable in order to further our purpose. But, if the past of the race can offer us any guidance, it is to be found in the fact that the sanctions which seem most profoundly to have influenced men's attitude to sex have been religious sanctions. This is psychologically explicable. One does not have to accept the Freudian view, that religion itself arises from the sublimation of sex desire, in order to appreciate its intimate relationship with sex experience. The very essence of religion is the feeling of the subordination of the individual to a superhuman power or powers. In the highly developed ethical religions, the Divine Will is identified with the spirit that, in human society, makes the individual find his deepest satisfaction in seeking the welfare of other individuals or of the race as a whole. The religious attitude is one that feels that the individual only then finds the true meaning of his life when he makes it serve ends that transcend it.

Now there is no experience in life that makes us feel ourselves more the instruments and agents of a purpose that transcends our individual aims, or that makes us realize the inadequacy, one may almost say the impossibility, of a purely selfish existence, than the experience of sex in its normal functioning. It brings us to the very creative center of life and makes us partners in the work of creation. We feel that we cannot fulfill our individual destiny without the aid of another individual who becomes suddenly an object

of supreme worth in our lives. And we find further that this intimate communion with the one whom we love is, also, not a thing complete in itself, but is Nature's device for preparing both of us to serve the ends of a progeny that will outlive us. Sex experience at its best makes our mortal lives a link with the eternal and we feel ourselves in consequence children of the Eternal.

Such religious considerations as these make entirely unnecessary and irrelevant any sanctions of reward and punishment whether in this world or in the next, except as the achievement of a good goal may be considered a reward for having consistently striven for it, and the failure to achieve it be regarded as a punishment for having strayed or faltered in our pursuit of it. In the evolution of religion, we find a growing tendency for faiths to rely less on fear than on love as the motive for ethical behavior. And certainly, when we are dealing with the control of the sex impulse, love is by far the more appropriate sentiment on which to depend. The sex impulse, instead of being looked upon from the ascetic, medieval point of view, as temptation to vice, should be looked upon as God's temptation to virtue, for the ethical expression of that impulse is one that satisfies the human spirit as its unethical expression is incapable of doing.

Sex is God's lure to make our life important to others, to seek self-realization in the merging of our own spirit in a larger self. First there is the new self that is created by the fusion of the individual selves of the man and the woman. From the time that they unite in marriage, the life of each is no longer a self-contained whole, but each wants the other, is wanting, lacking and incomplete without the other. There is a profound symbolism in the myth that Eve was made out of the very body of Adam, and that he felt his incompleteness until he was reunited with her and they became "one flesh." As children are born, the individual soul is further enlarged by merging in the collective spirit of family and home. But the spirit of the home tends in turn to identify itself with that of the larger community of which it is a part, for its main function is to prepare the children for eventually playing an independent role in the community. In this way, the sex communion of a man and a woman leads them to feel, and joyously to accept, responsibility for carrying on the spiritual culture of the race, even as it leads them to continue the germ plasm on which the physical perpetuation of the race depends. When the sex-impulse is not channelized by ethical considerations, it is dissipated in petty momentary satisfactions that keep us restless and dissatisfied because they lead outside the path of our spiritual self-realization.

The deepest intuition of our religious tradition with regard to sex still retains its validity, if we know how to transpose it, as it were, from the key of otherworldliness to that of thisworldliness. That intuition may be stated in these terms: sex, when it is experienced solely on a carnal and sensual plane, is an obstacle to salvation or self-realization, but when it is experienced on a spiritual plane, with full appreciation of its ethical and personal implications, it helps attain the fullest gratification of human desire, the most perfect orientation of the individual to his natural and social environment. This can be brought home to our youth if, instead of teaching them to look upon sex as something inherently shameful and evil, we encourage them to view it as something beautiful and holy which they must not profane.

Biblical and Rabbinic literature abounds in passages which emphasize such interpretation of the spiritual significance of sex. In the Bible the relation of God and Israel is frequently symbolized in terms of love and marriage:

"I remember for thee the affection of thy youth,
The love of thine espousals;

How thou wentest after Me in the wilderness,
In a land that was not sown."
(Jeremiah 2:2).

"I will betroth thee unto Me forever,
Yea I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in justice,
And in lovingkindness, and in compassion,
And I will betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness:
And thou shalt know the Lord."
(Hosea 2:21).

"Set me as a seal upon thy heart,
As a seal upon thine arm;
For love is strong as death,
Jealousy is cruel as the grave;
The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,
A very flame of the Lord.
Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it;
If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,
He would utterly be contemned."
(Song of Songs 8:6-7).

In Rabbinic literature, marital bliss is regarded as evidence of the presence of the *Shekhinah,* the manifestation of God in human life. Thus the Midrash calls attention to the fact that, in the Hebrew language the words for man and woman have two letters in common which spell *esh,* fire, and that the remaining letters spell the name of God, *yah.* From this it draws the striking inference that the relation between man and woman may become either a consuming fire or a divine revelation according to the use they make of their sex endowment. It is also worthy of note that in the traditional Jewish marriage ceremony, the emphasis is on the affirmative values of sex life. It stresses by implication, if not explicitly, such thoughts as these: that human life can contribute to the glorification of God, that man's power of procreation is a reflection of God's power of creation, that marriage is a joyous experience enhancing the value of Jewish life, that marriage restores the lost paradise of childish innocence, and that the bliss of marriage is the supreme expression of a happy social order.

By expressing such conceptions as these in the home, the synagogue and the school, we should not find it difficult to interest our young people in the ethical control of their sex life. Religious sanctions such as these are in full harmony with their eagerness to taste all the good that life has to offer, to live the whole cycle of human life in its fullness, and to live it as well, *sub specie aeternitatis,* with an appreciation of the divine prerogative of sharing responsibly and creatively in the life of the race. Nothing in such motivation is out of harmony with the spirit of the age or inconsistent with the youthfulness of its youth. Young people do not resent ethical guidance from their elders except when it manifests that kill-joy spirit which delights in prohibiting what age no longer enjoys.

The sort of sex-culture here recommended is free from this spirit. It implies a faith that the rising generation is as desirous of playing the game of life fairly as any generation that has preceded it. Such a point of view also takes for granted that youth wants to be happy, and, understanding that happiness is possible only to a personality that is not at war with itself, nor rebellious against the tasks that nature has prescribed for it, nor out of sympathy with its fellows,it assists youth to attain happiness by assigning to sex its appropriate place in a well-integrated, self-determined, socially-minded personality.

HENRIETTA SZOLD

By MIRIAM J. COHEN

THE perennial problems of whether great men mold their times or are produced by them is still a dilemma. It would seem that Miss Szold to a large extent molded contemporary Zionist ideals. Yet if that is true, how can we answer those who say that if the May Laws had not been passed in Russia, that if the Mandate had not been granted to Palestine, that if in 1927 the Va'ad Leumi had not been organized, that if Hitler had not come to Germany, Miss Szold would never have had those concrete and unique opportunities to serve her people to the full extent of her capacities? Both are true. Miss Szold is both a response to, and a molder of, the destiny of her people.

In the Jewish Encyclopaedia of 1905 there is a brief note about Henrietta Szold, "eldest daughter of Benjamin Szold,—since 1893 she has been secretary of the literary committee of the Jewish Publication Society of America—translated Darmesteter on the Talmud in 1897 and Lazarus *Ethics of Judaism* in 1900. In association with Cyrus Adler she has edited the American Jewish Year Book, and, independently, has contributed numerous articles to the Jewish periodicals. . . ." By ordinary standards that seems a good and adequate work for a life time. When we attempt to describe Miss Szold we realize at once that we cannot judge by ordinary criteria.

Fifty years ago, Russian Jewish refugees came to America—a strange land which symbolized to them Opportunity and Freedom—a Land of Promise. There were then a quarter of a million Jews in America. These Russian Jews could not speak English. They came as strangers to a strange home. Many of them came to Baltimore, the home of Miss Szold. They needed a hostess to teach them the rules of the house, and Henrietta Szold rose to welcome them. She organized classes to teach them English. She helped them to orient themselves as Jews in America. She was their hostess and their friend—an American and a Jew.

Today she is again a hostess to Jewish refugees in a land where there are about a quarter of a million Jews. This time she does not greet them as strangers in a strange land of vague promise. She can say to them with pride and with hope in the fulfillment of a great faith and a great work—"*b'rukim ha-baim.*"

What sort of person is this, who is always her people's hostess and whose dream of their own home grew from a wish to a reality? Miss Szold is a scholar with imagination; a dreamer who works; a worker who dreams; she knows people and yet loves them; she has known the bitterness of earth and yet has faith.

Even the bare facts of her life are dramatic with the drama of human sympathy and understanding and devotion to a faith. Faith without work is a poetic escape from the realities of life—it produces flabby-mindedness. It is the blended combination of faith and work that has made Miss Szold the outstanding American Jew, and the greatest Jewish woman in the world today.

Miss Szold's capacity for sheer physical work is extraordinary. No matter what time of the night you pass her room in the Hotel Eden in Jerusalem, the light is still burning. She will tell you in a deprecatory way that she falls asleep with the light on. But a prodigious amount of work will have mysteriously been got through while she was asleep. Documents, letters, statistical reports are read through and acted on, and new documents and letters and statistical reports are compiled. This

is not romantic work in the usual sense—it is sheer hard tedious work, that strains the eyes, and exhausts the nerves and wearies the mind. It is the sort of work busy executives employ half--a-dozen experts to do. Miss Szold is her own half-a-dozen experts. With it all she is never too busy to see people. No one who wants an appointment with Miss Szold is refused. She receives each person with that rare grace and dignity which is the hall mark of the great. Each person is an individual for her, and to each she gives generously of her understanding and her sympathy. You leave her with a new interest in yourself, and a respect that is almost veneration for her.

Miss Szold has built up her organizations by personal contact. She realizes that in a project there is no such thing as an unimportant job. In her office everything is important, and everything is done competently and thoroughly. No letter remains unanswered; no courtesy or tribute goes unacknowledged or unappreciated. In the rare moments when she is not actually at work it is a privilege to be with her. When she walks into a room, even if you had never seen her, you know immediately that a distinctive person has arrived. She is modest and unassuming. She speaks very little, in a low voice, and yet whatever she says seems to be significant, authoritative, important. She is delightful with children and charming with adults.

She never emotionalizes a situation. At the meeting of the Actions Committee in Jerusalem last year, Miss Szold read a factual, statistical account of her work. When she was finished speaking, every man rose in a spontaneous tribute, moved almost to tears. One of the members told me that when Miss Szold was finished with her report, you had a feeling that for the first time you understood what the term "selfish, disinterested service" meant. Here was a woman who had devoted her whole life to the service of her people completely selflessly. In these days of opportunism and exploitation, men still recognize and involuntarily revere absolute devotion.

The story of Miss Szold's first visit to Palestine in 1909 is familiar to all. Her immediate recognition of its problems, her organization of Hadassah, the Woman's Zionist Organization of America, has become not only factual history, but stirring legend. She worked tirelessly. No one who has not actually seen Palestine can fully appreciate what a gigantic labor it was. Near East standards of living are unimaginable to westerners. Palestine under a Turkish regime might have looked hopeless to even the best equipped medical and sanitation departments. Jewish Palestine of today is itself the most eloquent tribute to Miss Szold and to her loyal supporters. Cleanliness and order have taken the place of disease and filth; happy, normal, active children and young people; competent nurses and doctors, and modern hospitalization—all the result of the faith and vision and work of one woman, whose personality and wisdom created loyal support and cooperation wherever she sought it.

But monumental as this task was for any single life, it is but a segment of the work of Miss Szold. In 1927 the Zionist Organization made her a member of the Zionist Executive in Palestine. Anyone who knows the nature of a statesman's work will understand the sort of tact, knowledge, diplomacy, vision and imagination prerequisite for the job.

In 1930 when she was seventy years old, during a visit to America, she was elected a member of the Va'ad Leumi. She could have stayed here, and spent the rest of her time surrounded by loving relatives in Baltimore, where the trees turn autumn colors and where the grass is very green. In Palestine, which has a rare strange beauty of its own, there is not that green of spring and yellow and gold of autumn which Miss Szold speaks of so longingly and lovingly. She could have stayed here and not one

voice would have been lifted in protest, and not one would have questioned whether she had earned the right to rest. Women of seventy don't take on new and intricate and arduous jobs. But one woman did. Miss Szold returned to Palestine, to organize the Health, Education and Social Welfare work of Palestine for the Va'ad Leumi. She organized the social work for the whole country. And all this time the work of Hadassah was progressing. The women of this organization had given themselves to their work with the energy and enthusiasm of their founder. There is not a city in Palestine, no matter how remote, that has not a Hadassah Health Station where Jewish mothers and Arab mothers alike get prenatal and postnatal instruction and care.

She made surveys and recommendations; she drew up charts and reports for education, for health, for sanitation. It would seem as though that were a great and adequate work for a life time. Did she then look upon her work and say "It is enough. I will go home now and rest. I am seventy-three, I have served my people and I am tired"? No. There was still further service demanded of her.

Hitler had come to Germany. A Germany of such frenzied fiendishness and madness and wholesale slaughter as might destroy the faith of the most fervent believer in the civilization of modern man. And hundreds of his victims came to Palestine,—Jews who had lived in Germany for five hundred years, who loved it, who were outraged and disillusioned not only as Jews but as Germans. In other pogroms Jews had little affection for the countries of their persecution. This was unique even in the history of Jewish suffering—this double bitterness. Again it was Miss Szold who arose to welcome them, and to help them, and to teach them. The children of these Germans must be educated in a new culture with all its implications—language, folkways, tradition and ideals. It is not easy to make children happy in a new environment. They have come from a country fomenting hate and death, to a country symbolizing service and help. Subtle understanding is required to transform this from a bewilderingly abrupt experience to a normal readjustment. It is a task demanding education in the philological sense—a literal "leading out"; it is a task demanding the harmonious intermingling of the ideals of social work and education. For these German children must not only be made happy and secure for themselves as a personal readjustment, but they are the human material who will prove the soundness of the principles of Zionism for the future.

It is a disagreeable, uncomfortable four-hour trip from Jerusalem to Haifa, yet Miss Szold personally meets the boats bringing the German children to Palestine. She places them in *Kevutzot* and stays with them herself the first difficult days in a new environment.

This new work, she rightly feels, is the greatest she has ever undertaken. The psychic shock to the Jews of Germany has been terrific. Trained psychiatrists and professional psychologists with the best will and equipment could not rehabilitate these Jews from Germany. They need the love and the understanding of one of their own people; the tact and discretion and knowledge that comes from long experience in grappling with vital problems, and solving them. They need one, greater than they, to give them courage to begin again, and the will to live—they need Miss Szold. It is characteristic of her that she says she feels thankful to God that she has been allowed to do this work, which she considers to be the most satisfying and constructive that she has ever been privileged to do. Here is the real aristocrat to whom service is an honor, and work a privilege. It is *noblesse oblige* in its purest form.

It is unbelievable that she is seventy-five years old, because it seems impossible that any one person could have accomplished so much in that time, and because

she is so young, so full of energy, so fired with enthusiasm.

It is her birthday. The celebration of Hanukkah has taken unto itself a new significance and a new glory. And let those who complain that glorious episodes are only in ancient history and heroes are long ago legends, know that in celebrating the birthday of Henrietta Szold, they celebrate the birthday of one who is great even when compared with all the great of the ages. She is a great woman, a great Jew and a great person.

In a world of chaos and darkness, her life is a symbol of hope, her personality a symbol of courage and dauntlessness and beauty. If American Jewry had given nothing to the world but Miss Szold, we could be proud. Her own works have crowned her. The power of words is too weak, and plaudits and tributes can add nothing to her glory, except in some small measure to express the reverence and love we feel for her.

There is not one among her contemporaries who does not in humility and reverence and gratitude and love wish her on this birthday many further years of health, of happiness and of peace.

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